

Ellen Stark Ford Home

(*San Francisco, Cal.*)

A. M. G.

"Sh! Go softly! The babies are having their nap." Sure enough! Eyes tight closed, dimples quiet, tiny hands (and what is so exquisite as a baby's hand?), tiny hands and restless feet still. Something like a dozen small people, each in a small white bed in the nursery. And you wouldn't know, really you wouldn't, that their fathers and mothers came from far-away Japan or Korea, for the fast-asleep faces might be of our own American-born.

Ah, but these are American-born, too, most of them, and we mean that they shall be American-taught and trained, and that is why we have our Ellen Stark Ford Home in San Francisco. Perhaps the distinguishing characteristic of this Home is the number of "really-truly" babies that it mothers. Some of the Japanese people find life in the new country very hard—too hard, at times, at least for the mother, and many of the children in the Home know no other watch-care than that of our Superintendent and teachers.

As soon as the children are old enough for kindergarten, a large, sunny room in

the basement is ready for them. With them here are a goodly number of day scholars, and it is a pretty sight to see the Kindergarten teacher coming with her troop of little people—for she must needs gather them from their homes, and take them safely back when the session is over.

Often the mothers of the day-scholars are invited guests at what seem to them very wonderful birthday parties—the “treat” thereof being a table-cloth and a birthday cake.

The attitude of the little ones toward guests in the Home is abundant proof of the atmosphere of love that surrounds them; small hands are lifted to welcoming arms, soft cheeks are used to kisses—and the older girls are not slow to bestow caresses and loving care.

“What shall we do with Johnnie?” The question represents one of the serious problems of the Home. Johnnie and his sister, also in the Home, are half-orphans. The laddie will soon be too large to remain in a girls’ school, but the father will not consent to the separation of his children, and the only alternative thus far apparent is to have both children sent to heathen grandparents in Japan.

Many of the girls come to the Home as to a boarding-school, especially those who are orphans or half-orphans. When old enough they attend the public school, several already being in the high school. Besides this, the Home has classes in Japanese and Korean, for it is not the intention of our workers to wean them from their native

countries. Rather do they see in this "foreign mission work at home" a God-given opportunity to help in winning the Orient for Christ.

The children and older girls dress in American costume and eat American food, but with emphasis on rice, of which they use a hundred pounds a month, using it as freely as we use potatoes. For the Saturday dinner, a fixed sum is given the older girls from which they provide a Japanese dinner, preparing it themselves.

There is still a third class in this Home, and one that demands special attention and interest, for our work is for women as well as girls. The United States government sanctions the coming of "picture brides," but requires that they be re-married here. This involves many a steamship visit, for in such cases the government looks to the Home workers for definite assistance. But even after being admitted, the Japanese women are often in sore need of American friendship and help.

One of these "brides" lived with her husband three months, but he proved to be unkind and even brutal, beating and choking her for alleged "disobedience"—for implicit obedience of womanhood to the husband, or his elder brother if he is dead, is the first article in the creed of a Japanese man. Finally, the little woman was brought to the Home to "learn obedience," on the advice of the Japanese (Protestant) minister. She knew nothing of work, but learned to help in the nursery and laundry, and remained in the Home for three peaceful

months. At the end of that time, five Japanese men came to conduct her before a committee of nine Japanese men—never a woman among them—to see if she had learned her lesson. The matron insisted on accompanying her, but before she knew it they made the wife sign a paper promising obedience, with a penalty of \$300 for failure. The money was to be paid to the husband, and no plea for divorce could be made for two years.

When the matron understood she was indignant, and called on the Home lawyer to set things right. He promptly said such contracts could not be made in America, and that the husband, a worthless fellow, could not enforce it. "If he annoys her," he added, "I'll send him to jail. Moreover, he must pay \$30 a month for her support."

When asked why they demanded \$300, the "committee" replied, "For punishment."

"Punishment for what?"

They had the grace to laugh at this, and finally decided it was to pay the cost of her ocean voyage!

Such is womanhood without the protection of Christianity! Such are the lives from which we hope and trust to save our Japanese girls through the blessed ministry of Ellen Stark Ford Home.

WOMAN'S HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
150 Fifth Avenue, New York City

50 or less, 6s.; 50 to 100, 10c.